



SOIL AND WATER *Resources*

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During its Oct. 21 meeting in Jefferson City, the Missouri Soil and Water Districts Commission unanimously elected Richard Fordyce of Bethany to serve as chairman and Dan Devlin of Edina as vice chairman.

The Soil and Water Districts Commission establishes policy and general programs for the saving of Missouri's soil and water through local soil and water conservation districts, with the largest program being the cost-share program. The cost-share program provides financial incentives to install erosion-control and water quality practices to owners of privately held agricultural land.

"With guidance from the commission and help from local districts, landowners in the state of Missouri have proven themselves good stewards of our state's soil and water resources," said Fordyce. "I pledge to support

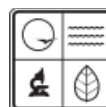
local districts and landowners in continuing important conservation work for future generations."

Fordyce farms 2,000 acres of row crops and an additional 1,000 of grass and hay. He raises corn, soybeans, wheat and cattle. He currently serves on the United Soybean Board as one of three directors from Missouri. He is a member of the Harrison County Farm Bureau, the South Harrison School Board and has been a member of various other agricultural organizations in the past.

"Missouri is known for having one of the best cost-share programs in the nation," said Bryan Hopkins, the director of the Soil and Water Conservation Program within the Missouri Department of Natural Resources. "As a farmer and a very active participant in the agricultural community in Missouri, I am confident that Richard Fordyce will lead the Soil and Water Districts Commission in continuing that tradition."

The commission is made up of six farmers and four ex-officio members. The six farmer members are appointed by the governor of Missouri. Ex-officio members are the directors of the departments of natural resources, agriculture, conservation and the dean of the college of agriculture of the University of Missouri. The commission meets approximately seven times a year, mainly in Jefferson City.

The commission also includes: Kathryn Braden, Bradleyville; Baughn Merideth, Caruthersville; Bill Ransdall, Waynesville; and Gary Vandiver, Richmond.



**Missouri Department
of Natural Resources**

Soil and Water Conservation Program

Gov. Nixon Appoints Bill Ransdall and Gary Vandiver to the Soil and Water Districts Commission

Gov. Jay Nixon recently appointed two new commissioners to the Soil and Water Districts Commission, Bill Ransdall and Gary Vandiver.



Ransdall, owns and operates a family farm in Waynesville. He also has an Angus cow/calf operation. He has been an active participant in the state cost-share program. He was formerly the president of American Brass and Copper Inc., which reclaimed and recycled primarily government contracts with the two most prominent being Hoover Dam

and Minuteman Missile silos. He also ran another company, Ransdall Recycling, which was one of the largest non-ferrous metal recyclers in Missouri. He has since retired from or sold both companies. He also served as a state representative where he was chairman of the energy and environment committee. He also served as vice-chairman of the agriculture policy committee and chaired appropriations for the economic and natural resources committee.

Presently he is the presiding commissioner of Pulaski County, the president of Bill L. Ransdall & Co. Inc. (commercial property holdings), president of Rastur Development Co. Inc. (reclaimed household government property), partner in R.S.D.L.L.C. (townhouse and apartment complex), secretary of Leonard Wood Institute (government funded research and development 501c non-profit), owner/operator of River Bend Farms and director of Mid-America Bank. He attended the University of Missouri in Rolla.

"I am looking forward to improving relationships, communications and public awareness of the district offices," said Ransdall. "I am a hard working, honest, straight forward person who will serve this commission well."



Ransdall's family consists of his wife of 42 years, Pat, two daughters, two son-in-laws and six grandchildren. He enjoys fishing and hunting.

Vandiver, from Richmond, is the general manager of a family-owned grain elevator, Orrick Farm Service, a retail agriculture sales outlet. He is also the co-owner of a grain elevator in northwest Missouri and a

grain export company. He has actively participated in the state cost-share program through the Ray County Soil and Water Conservation District. A few years ago, Vandiver completed the Missouri Agricultural Leadership of Tomorrow program, and more recently, finished a one-year term as chairman of the Missouri Agribusiness Association. He is a member of the Ray County Cattlemen's Association and the Mid America CropLife Association. He has a bachelor's degree in agriculture economics from the University of Missouri-Columbia.

"While growing up, I had a well-rounded farm experience. My brother and I raised hogs and cattle and virtually every grain and hay crop possible when we were still in high school. I worked my way through college by helping my parents in the summer and custom baling hay," said Vandiver.

Vandiver has been married to his wife, Penny, since 1995. They have three children. His biggest hobbies are his cattle and his land, but he also enjoys snow skiing, golfing, coaching football and softball, and taking his kids to new and exciting places.

Commission Votes to Allocate Additional \$1.3 Million to Qualifying Districts

During the Oct. 21 meeting, the commission approved additional allocations totaling approximately \$1.3 million for resource concerns that experienced a high level of landowner interest. Districts will receive an additional allocation for each of their resource concerns providing the obligated and pending contracts exceed 80 percent at the end of the first quarter. The commission provided a minimum and maximum allocation for each resource concern and matched any resource concern's initial allocation that was between the minimum and maximums established. At this time, the commission did not authorize any additional allocation for the animal waste management resource concern. If you have any further questions about the allocation process, please contact your district coordinator.

Expiring CRP Land Qualifies for Cost-Share Funding Immediately Provided there is an Erosion Problem

Under the Conservation Reserve Program, a federal program that encourages farmers to convert highly erodible cropland or other environmentally sensitive acreage to vegetative cover for a multi-year contract, land is considered cropland and will qualify for state cost-share immediately after the contract expires, if there is an erosion problem.

During last year's training conference in Osage Beach, a resolution was developed by the Missouri Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts stating that they wanted first year cost-share funding eligibility for expiring CRP land that will be brought into production. The Soil and Water Districts Commission reviewed this resolution at the May 2009 meeting and supported it. The commission

FY2010 Cost-Share as of Oct. 1

Resource Concern	Allocated	Obligated	Obligated %	Claimed	Claimed %
Animal Waste Management	\$416,496.58	\$142,500.00	34.21 %	\$0.00	0.00 %
Grazing Management	\$3,909,786.98	\$1,223,305.45	31.29 %	\$98,683.28	2.52 %
Groundwater Management	\$513,951.71	\$100,495.36	19.55 %	\$17,356.73	3.38 %
Irrigation Management	\$707,387.67	\$187,277.84	26.47 %	\$5,895.70	0.83 %
Sensitive Areas	\$1,008,802.59	\$240,747.19	23.86 %	\$2,010.00	0.20 %
Sheet and Rill/Gully	\$17,974,853.48	\$7,475,791.72	41.59 %	\$1,357,590.74	7.55 %
Streambank Erosion	\$170,693.60	\$0.00	0.00 %	\$0.00	0.00 %
Woodland Erosion	\$518,706.84	\$229,919.88	44.33 %	\$20,432.21	3.94 %
TOTAL	\$25,220,679.45	\$9,600,037.44	38.06 %	\$1,501,968.66	5.95 %

FY2010 SALT Cost-Share as of Oct. 1

	Allocated	Obligated	Obligated %	Claimed	Claimed %
TOTAL	\$7,030,137.60	\$3,277,763.93	46.62 %	\$751,426.44	10.69 %

The committee found that CRP acreages are considered a crop rather than grass, thus qualifying this acreage, in some instances, during first year when there is an erosion problem. For more guidance on how to properly run the RUSLE2 formula, contact your local NRCS office or a certified district technician.

Commission Approves Two Options for Health Care Coverage for 2010

The Soil and Water Districts Commission approved two different health care plans for soil and water conservation district employees for 2010. District staff has the option to choose which plan works best for them.

PPO 300

- \$300 deductible.
- 10 percent co-insurance after deductible is met for doctor visits.
- Maximum out-of-pocket expense of \$1,200 per year.
- Monthly employee premium of \$31.

PPO 2000

- \$2,000 deductible.
- Co-payments for doctor visits.
- Maximum out-of-pocket expense of \$6,000 per year (Program office will cover \$3,000 of these expenses only after employee has paid the first \$3,000).
- No monthly employee premium.

While the PPO 300 plan offers district staff a lower deductible and out-of-pocket expense than the PPO 2000 plan, it does represent a higher monthly cost to the program office. As a result, the program office is expected to be over budget from projected district health care costs for fiscal year 2010 by \$203,543.

The program office will again not pay for office co-pays or prescription costs, and in a change from last year, the program office will no longer pay for emergency room co-pays.

MCHCP has strongly advised district supervisors to be cautious regarding steps to cover the costs of the district employee's portion of the monthly premium, deductible and/or out-of-pocket expenses. MCHCP has no issue with district supervisors helping with the cost of premiums as long as the employee has some financial stake in their health care. If 100 percent of the employee's expenses were paid, which includes the premium, deductible and out-of-pocket expenses, it would drive up the cost of group health care for all the districts and make it problematic to provide group comprehensive health care coverage in the future.

If you have any questions, please contact Jim Boschert at the Soil and Water Conservation Program office at 573-522-3320.

Commission Approves the Use of District Timesheets

The commission approved the program office to develop tools to assess the program. Timesheets will be the first of these tools for districts to use to help the commission see what types of work district staff is doing and what they are spending the majority of their time on. A task force consisting of commission members, association members, district staff, program staff and others would review the timesheets and other tools and make recommendations.

These tools are being developed because the economic downturn is impacting the budget. If the economic downturn continues, there needs to be tools available to help make the best budgetary decisions possible. Currently, the department's recommended budget includes reductions only from the cost-share program. The commission was briefed on the importance of maintaining an appropriate ratio of administrative costs to incentives. Excessive administrative costs may cause the program to lose the support of other agricultural organizations and the taxpayers.

Commission Revises Cooperator Definition

During its Oct. 21 meeting, the commission revised its definition of a cooperator as it relates to the election rules. The new definition states that **a cooperator is a person who is actively engaged in farming and practices conservation activities related to agriculture.** This replaces the previous definition of any landowner who has cooperated with the district in carrying out a soil and water conservation district practice successfully from implementation through the claims process. The previous definition makes some current board members ineligible to be a supervisor and limits the number of people eligible to run for a position. The department appreciates the positive feedback during the area meetings concerning conducting elections. If you have any questions regarding the new definition of a cooperator, please contact your district coordinator.

Districts Now Scanning all Cost-Share Documents Resulting in Quicker Landowner Payments

Due to increasing electronic document storage and to reduce district costs associated with mailings and office supplies, all signed cost-share contracts, change orders and contract payments are now scanned into the Missouri Soil and Water Information Management System prior to payment being issued. Districts will not be required to scan in receipts for practices. Districts can scan in any other supporting documentation at their discretion. Paperwork will no longer be required to be mailed to the program office. Districts still need to keep receipts on file in order to supply actual cost data from practices completed in the state cost-share program to be included with the federal actual cost data when generating state cost lists. Receipts will also need to be kept for seed and fertilizer, where the amount applied is needed to verify that applicable NRCS standards and specifications have been met. These changes will result in quicker turnaround on landowner payments. If you have any questions, contact your district coordinator.

Landowner Signatures Required After Listing All Components on Cost-Share Contracts

The commission voted to require districts to list all components on cost-share contracts prior to having the landowner sign the contract. This is to ensure the landowner is aware of all the components and their respective costs when signing a cost-share contract. Currently, components can be added to a contract after it has been signed by the landowner. This change will be incorporated into the MoSWIMS system as soon as possible. If you have any questions, please contact your district coordinator.

Department Develops New Guidelines for District Newsletters on the Web

The department recently developed policies for putting district newsletters on the state-sponsored district Web sites. Districts have been posting newsletters in the past, but the department removed all newsletters back in late July due to the presence of advertisements. The Office of Administration strictly prohibits advertisements on state-sponsored Web sites. Districts can still include the ads in their mailed copies. A general statement about appropriate content was developed as well as guidance concerning the support of commission policies. If you have any questions about the new policies, please contact the program office at 573-751-4932.

appointed a committee to further develop this concept.

Maries County Soil and Water Conservation District Constructs New Office Building

The Maries County Soil and Water Conservation District recently held an open house to debut their brand new office building, which they designed and built with funds and donations from a variety of sources. The district officially opened its doors for business at the new site on May 1 but held an open house in September.

Since becoming a stand-alone district in 1995, the district has moved twice. According to district program specialist, Sandy Hutchison, a combination of rising rental rates and the continuous relocation for the landowners motivated the district to inquire about a more permanent option. "We have a very active cost-share program and did not want our landowners to have to drive to another county for assistance," said Hutchison. "We felt it was very important to the landowners in our county that we stay here."

Maries County district employees worked with the Soil and Water Conservation Program office to determine if the district could own property. Once this was approved, the district checked into a former restaurant and a small house, but both would require a lot of remodeling so a

location was found to build. The couple that owned the lot was willing to fund the construction to the district's specifications and now the new 1,200 square foot building with an attached educational pavilion is completed. While the old office was in a residential area, the new location is along a major highway and close to the local sale barn and MFA. The lot is big enough for the district's rental equipment, and there is room for landowners to pull in with their livestock trailers on sale days.

The district does not own the building yet, but so far they have contributed \$30,000 from equipment rental fees and have received over \$20,000 in donations from local businesses and foundations. In the meantime, an agreement is in place to allow the district to rent until the remainder of the funds is raised.

"The Department of Natural Resources is very supportive of the Maries County Soil and Water Conservation District in their efforts to continue to provide opportunities for landowners to participate in their programs," said Ken Struempf, an environmental manager in the Soil and Water Conservation Program. "Maries County SWCD is a great customer service model."

If you have any questions, feel free to call Sandy Hutchison at 573-422-3342.



The new offices of the Maries County Soil and Water Conservation District located in Vienna.



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